



GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE
CITIES INITIATIVE
L'ALLIANCE DES VILLES
DES GRANDS LACS ET DU SAINT-LAURENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAYOR CHOW OF TORONTO APPOINTED CO-CHAIR OF CITIES INITIATIVE ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION COMMISSION

TORONTO, ON — July 2, 2026 — The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative / Alliance des villes des Grands Lacs et du Saint-Laurent (Cities Initiative) is pleased to announce the appointment of Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow as Co-Chair of the organization's Mayors Commission on Economic Transformation. Deputy Mayor Paul Ainslie will also serve as Toronto's representative on the Commission. She will join the other Commission Co-Chairs, including Mayor Brandon Johnson of Chicago, IL; Québec City Mayor Bruno Marchand, QC; Mayor Lucas Cleveland of Cobourg, ON; Mayor Justin Bibb of Cleveland, OH; Mayor Roger Reinert of Duluth, MN; and Mayor Cory Mason of Racine, WI.

In 2025, the Cities Initiative released its coveted [Economic Transformation Action Plan: A Blueprint for Economic Growth and Freshwater Stewardship in the Great Lakes & St. Lawrence River Region](#). The plan provides a 10-year blueprint to help the region's communities prepare for and capitalize on the historic opportunity to transform the regional economy into a world-renowned Fresh Coast Economic Corridor.

"With abundant fresh water and other comparative advantages, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region is poised for a new era of economic growth," said Mayor Chow. "This is why I am proud to co-chair the Cities Initiative's Mayors Commission on Economic Transformation, working alongside my colleagues on both sides of the border to build a Fresh Coast Economic Corridor that safeguards its unparalleled freshwater resources, future-proofs its businesses and communities and ensures economic benefits are broadly shared."

With 84 percent of North America's surface fresh water, a highly integrated regional economy and other comparative advantages, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region can provide a stable home for companies and people fleeing water scarcity elsewhere, ensuring the region's continued economic prosperity far into the future.

"I am delighted that Mayor Chow is joining us in chairing the Cities Initiative's Mayors Commission on Economic Transformation," said Mayor Johnson of Chicago. "As mayors representing thriving communities across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region, we share a common vision: ensuring that our region remains a vibrant place to live, work, invest and play while preserving the precious freshwater resources that are the very foundation of our economic prosperity and environmental health."

Through the Action Plan's implementation, the Cities Initiative, in collaboration with key partners and regional stakeholders, seeks to contribute to achieving the following regional goals by 2035: Attract half a million businesses; Create over 18 million new jobs; Avoid any increase in consumptive water loss; Improve water quality from "fair" to "good;" and reduce emissions by 300 million metric tons.

About the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a multinational coalition of municipal and Indigenous government executives representing communities in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region who are working to promote economic prosperity and protect our fresh water for the benefit of current and future generations. With more than 425 communities represented, the Cities Initiative is leading the way in advancing the environmental, economic, and social health of the region by addressing issues impacting its residents. The Cities Initiative is comprised of a U.S. organization and a Canadian organization.

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